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Oil Heritage Region
Management Action Plan Update
Executive Summary 2004

The Oil Heritage Region is one of the most authentic and powerful of the heritage areas in the United States. The form and culture of this region bear the imprint of the oil industry: from the town centers that were developed with oil profits to the oil leases and equipment that dot the landscape and are often plainly visible from a road. The story of oil is interpreted in many venues, ranging from the state-operated Drake Well Museum, on the site where the initial well was drilled, to small locally managed museums and collections. Moreover, the area has a dramatic natural landscape that is increasingly appreciated by residents and tourists, oriented to the Allegheny River and its tributaries, including the Oil Creek Valley, the locus of “oil fever” in the second half of the 19th century.

Purpose of this Plan

This Management Plan Update, prepared for the Oil Heritage Region, Inc. (OHR, Inc.), now operating as the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism (Oil Region Alliance or ORA), is intended to assist this innovative management entity to most effectively use its resources to capitalize on these assets and accomplish its mission.

This document updates a 1994 Management Action Plan for the Oil Heritage Region (OHR) that led to the designation of Venango County and portions of Crawford County as a state heritage park by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In the ten years since completion of the Plan, and with the help of over $3.3 million in grants through the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program of the state’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, OHR, Inc. has been instrumental in working with partners across the region, facilitating a total of $21.7 million of total investment in the key resources of this significant area. These investments have supported creation and expansion of an outstanding regional recreational trail system, improvements to interpretive venues, historic preservation projects, public environment improvements and economic development in the region’s historic downtowns, and expanded management capability.

With this strong record of accomplishment, as well as the passing of a decade since the completion of the original plan, an update of the Management Plan was timely to take account of changed market conditions, evolving project needs, and the opportunity to build upon the region’s successes.

1 Since the plan was prepared for OHR, Inc. but will be implemented by ORA, both entities are referred to in this report. In general, OHR, Inc. refers to the entity that has been active through the period that includes the preparation of this plan whereas ORA refers to the entity that will implement these recommendations. Where the abbreviation OHR is used, this refers to the overall Oil Heritage Region.
Significance of the Oil Heritage Region

Oil was commercially recovered in the Oil Creek Valley of northwestern Pennsylvania beginning in 1859. The tools, the terminology, the extraction, the transportation, and the financial norms for the oil industry, which are used throughout the world today, were developed here in the latter part of 19th century. Heroes and scoundrels, enormous riches, violence, and environmental damage are part of this story.²

The commercial history of petroleum in the United States began at Drake Well along Oil Creek near Titusville, Pennsylvania. Edwin L. Drake, the agent for the Seneca Oil Company of New Haven, Connecticut, and William Smith, a salt well driller from Tarentum, Pennsylvania, successfully brought in the world’s first drilled well on August 27, 1859. The well depth of 69½ feet produced 20 barrels per day for nearly three years.

Oil well drilling required suction pumps to remove natural gas from the wells, leading eventually to the early development of the natural gas industry. Natural gas was initially considered a hazardous and unusable by-product of the oil wells, but quickly became a significant lighting and fuel source in the region. In 1867, natural gas was piped to some of Oil City’s homes for cooking and heating purposes. The Emlenton Gas Light and Fuel Company was organized in 1882, the first natural gas company chartered in the state and only the third in the United States.

Drake Well Museum, operated by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, is the second largest fee attraction in the PHMC system and offers powerful interpretations of the stories and resources of the oil industry. Other museums and visitor attractions, including the Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad that traverses Oil Creek Valley, site of many early episodes of frenzied exploration, provide important interpretation of the industry and local history. However, this region has an authenticity and powerful heritage that transcends any museum or historic site.

Across the region’s landscape are unique natural and man-made resources that are intertwined with the history of the oil industry and its remarkable heritage of boom and bust, spoils, and recovery. The permanent effects of economic prosperity that the oil industry brought are most evident in the four communities of the region – Titusville, Oil City, Franklin and Emlenton. Each of these urban areas feature extant oil related settings, landmarks, and distinctive residential, commercial and industrial architecture.

The remnants of the oil industry are also evident across the region. Abandoned boomtown settlements, oil farms, and inactive oil fields provide reminders of past lifeways. Of the more than 8,000 reported abandoned (oil and gas) wells in Pennsylvania, approximately 1,932 exist in Venango County, with 228 of those being slated for plugging.³ This situation is a reminder of the continuing environmental consequences of the region’s early oil boom. Sites of former refineries and operating oil leases that have been in continuous operation since the region’s boom days provide excellent opportunities to interpret the continuing legacy of the oil industry.

Finally, this region communicates a story of people who realized the opportunities (and experienced the tragedies) of a business that transformed whole societies as well as individual lives and entire landscapes. Traditions associated with oil heritage are carried on through festivals, events, and other activities including several Boomtown Days, Oil Field Picnic, Oil Heritage festivals. This story of an industry of worldwide enormous economic, social, and technological significance can be powerfully understood in this corner of Pennsylvania.

² The text in this section is largely excerpted from a report commissioned by the National Park Service in 2000 that recommended support for designation of the Oil Heritage Region as a National Heritage Area.

Implementation to Date in OHR Communities

The substantial implementation of the original Management Plan reflects the energy and progressive approach that has been taken by OHR, Inc. in cooperation with its partners - non-profits, communities, and funding supporters.

Attractions and venues have been strengthened across the OHR over the ten-year period since the completion of the original Management Action Plan, including new exhibits and facilities in Drake Well Museum, Oil Creek State Park, Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad (OC&TRR), Barrow Civic Theatre, DeBence Antique Music World Museum, Venango Museum of Art, Science & Industry, and the Emlenton Visitor Orientation Center and Pumping Jack Museum. At the Weaver Building in Oil City, an historic structure situated at a highly visible entry to the community on Route 8 and on the regional bike trail network, initial steps have been taken to prepare for development of a mixed-use complex that will include a museum, visitor services, and private uses.

The environmental quality of downtowns has been improved in the region’s core communities - Titusville, Oil City, Franklin, and Emlenton - through streetscape, sidewalk, landscape, and some interpretive installations.

Dramatic progress has been made on implementation of region-serving bike and hike trails. These trails form a network that connect key destinations and are widely recognized for their quality and value, although work remains to be done to complete the system. The work supported by OHR, Inc. includes lengthening the multi-purpose bicycle trail by 18 miles along the Allegheny River, adding a deck to a former railroad bridge in Belmar, and conduct engineering for linkage of trail system throughout the OHR in cooperation with the Allegheny Valley Trails Association.

Regional branding is underway, although this still needs to be emphasized, strengthened and unified. At least two logos exist (OHR, Inc. and the Oil Heritage Region Tourist Promotion Agency [OHRTPA]), leading to the possibility for consumer confusion about identity and message.

OHR, Inc. has supported diverse preservation activities, in addition to investments in venues that were mentioned above, including nomination and approval of 4 historic districts and other properties now listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the OHR Multiple Property Documentation Form, and the installation of 8 PHMC markers.

Funding support has been provided for educational materials to enable publication, distribution, and printing of numerous educational and promotional books, booklets, brochures, rack cards, maps, placemats, sketchbooks, postcards, cassettes, CDs, and guides.

OHR, Inc. has taken a major role in creating and supporting new regional events that deal with heritage and recreation. OHR, Inc. staffed and coordinated the Venango County Bicentennial (2000), the first Victorian Architecture Conference (2000), Oil Region River Romp (annual since 1998), Hike for Heritage (since 1996), and Oil Region Road Tour.

Top: Streetscape improvements in Franklin, as well as the Barrow Civic Theatre and DeBence Antique Music World Museum, have brought a new vitality to the community.
Center: The Standard Oil Rig at Drake Well Museum is a highly visible element of the site.
Left: Streetscape improvements have been made in Oil City. This segment will be part of a “share-the-road” bikeway connecting to larger regional systems.
venues that communicate most strongly the heritage of the region.

The primary attractions that are most closely related to the oil industry include the state managed Drake Well Museum and the Pithole Historic Site, under state management, the non-profit Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad, and Oil Creek State Park, providing a powerful image of a landscape of discovery. Additional oil-related interpretive venues of a smaller scale include the Pumping Jack Museum in the Crawford Center in Emlenton, exhibits in the Perry Street Station in Titusville, and interpretive sites along the OC&TRR route, including Coal Oil Johnny’s House at Rynd Farm, and the Petroleum Centre Station.

Several other venues display significant collections that have been enabled by oil wealth, including the Venango Museum of Art, Science, and Industry, the DeBence Antique Music World, Dan Hardesty’s Wild West Museum, the Tyred Wheels Museum, and the Venango County Historical Society.

Other interpretive initiatives are in process, including the rehabilitation of the Weaver Building in Oil City into a mixed-use complex that will contain a museum with exhibits to explain the influence of the oil industry on transportation, a proposed Mather Museum in Titusville in a rehabilitated block that contains the studio of the famous photographer, John A. Mather, and a potential natural gas museum or exhibit utilizing a significant collection of artifacts from the United Natural Gas Company collection, including operating equipment, maps, records, and other historical materials.

The emphasis of the Plan Update is to build upon the strengths of these core attractions and to build linkages among attractions in the region. This effort needs to be based on sound interpretive principles that are audience- and outcome-specific, with careful pre- and post-testing of interpretive and exhibit concepts.

At Drake Well Museum, large-scale changes to improve interpretation are recommended. Plans under consideration by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission should be strongly supported and should be supplemented by a boomtown installation within the museum, coupled with a new audio-visual experience. Additionally, supplemental site interpretation – both waysides and an audio tour – would make a positive difference in the visitor experience.

Other core interpretive sites that should be enhanced with supplemental exhibits, audio interpretation, and supplementary guide materials, are Rynd Farm, Perry Street Station, the Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad, the Petroleum Centre area, and Oil Creek State Park. Relatively modest cost im-
Oil Creek State Park now connects the Oil Heritage Region (OHR, Inc.). The Oil Region Alliance should build upon the brand and identity of the region to connect interpretive venues to one another and to reinforce the sense of the region. This should include agreement on a single logo, or brand, for the region, installation of orientation exhibits at each attraction that explain the relationship of the site to the region as a whole, completion of the system of orientation centers by addition of sites in Titusville, Oil City, and Franklin, and development of an extensive system of wayside exhibits, designed to a common standard and “appearance,” to reinforce the regional brand.

Regional signage will enhance the regional branding through a system being designed concurrent with this update, to include signage systems for entry routes, tour route blazes, and identification signs for key municipalities.

Recreation

The region’s rich natural resources provide a natural setting that is an important counterpoint to heritage sites and is also an important visitor draw. Major parks, such as Oil Creek State Park and Two Mile Run County Park, provide recreational experiences, fishing sites, and overnight campsites and accommodations. The area is renowned for the scale and diversity of its fishing, with over 200 linear miles of designated stocked and wild trout waters, as well as river and lake fishing.

The Allegheny River, which traverses much of the region, can and should be more intensively utilized for boating and fishing. The Plan recommends providing additional river access points in Emlenton, Kennerdell, and President, enabling increased utilization by boaters and encouraging outfitters and recreation users to have longer stays in the region. Additionally, community castways are proposed on riverfronts in core communities and Oil Creek State Park and Two Mile Run County Park to expand recreational opportunities close to existing centers of population and recreational activity.

In recent years, due in large part to the efforts of the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, with financial assistance from many sources, including OHR, Inc., the region has developed an extensive network of high quality multi-use trails that attract bikers and hikers in increasing numbers. Analysis of visitor patterns to heritage and recreation attractions, including the many festivals and events across the Oil Region, reveals the numbers of recreational visitors are growing and are significantly larger than the numbers of visitors to heritage attractions.

The recreational trail system should be expanded and completed. The highest priority action should be the completion of the trail gap between Petroleum Centre and Oil City and the trail connection to Em literature regarding the plan, which will require agreements to traverse the former Rouseville and Emlenton refinery sites. These connections would provide a nearly complete trail that would link the core communities and related activity centers in the region to one another in the north-south direction, along a dramatic bikeway through the entirety of Oil Creek State Park and parallel to the Allegheny River. Regional efforts should encompass extended connections to activity centers at the edges of the OHR boundary and beyond, including linkages to Spartansburg in Crawford County, Clarion County, Mercer County, along the Allegheny River, and to Foxburg.

Trail expansions should include spurs to connect to other destinations, such as Two Mile Run County Park, area downtowns, and other destinations of interest that are relatively close to the bike trail system, such as iron furnaces, historic sites,
New Facilities

Several new facilities are recommended in the Plan Update. These include the Weaver Garage mixed-use facility, a potential natural gas exhibit and/or museum, and an archive facility.

The Weaver Garage is a significant undertaking that involves a mixed-use development. Approximately two-thirds of the building will be converted to include: a Visitor Center in conjunction with the Oil City Area Chamber of Commerce; a museum that focuses on the linkage between the oil industry and transportation; bike rental and trailhead concessions; and other private leased space. The remaining one-third of the building will be devoted to an existing automotive repair and sales business. The project has received TEA-21 and Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program funds, which have supported safety and security improvements in the building. The building comprises a total of over 70,000 square feet and has the potential to generate income through approximately 18,000 square feet of leased space. However, the 10,000 square foot museum will have operating expenses that will have to be offset by admissions and other sources of revenue. A business plan should be prepared for this structure and for the museum to determine operating costs, revenues, and management, and ORA should explore an arrangement whereby a proportion of future income could be returned to ORA in consideration of the significant improvement funds that OHR, Inc. has and ORA will continue to secure for the building’s preservation and rehabilitation.

Natural Gas interpretation is provided at exhibits at the Emlenton Visitor Center and the Drake Well Museum. While both venues feature the early natural gas industry in exhibits, OHR, Inc. desires to explore a larger separate location that could include the United Natural Gas Company’s collection of operating equipment, maps, records, and other historical materials that is currently being curated. Accordingly, a feasibility study is recommended to determine the audience and their interests, specific interpretive themes, financial and operational structure, space and display requirements, and location for this potential exhibit or museum.

Supplemental archive space is needed to enable a repository for donations from private collectors, in the region and elsewhere, and to provide public access to these collections. Although Drake Well Museum and the Venango County Historical Society both have archive space, there are considerable private collections of artifacts, documents, and photographs associated with Oil Region heritage that may be either inappropriate or infeasible in
these locations. A need also exists for additional storage of official historical documents of both Venango and Crawford counties and several of the region’s municipalities, especially their pre-1900 materials. The Plan recommends conducting a feasibility study to determine the scope and scale of these requirements as well as the amount and location of space where such a facility might be located. Based on comparison to the current Drake Well Museum archive facilities, it is suggested that an approximate size of 1,500 square feet may be appropriate.

**Oil Boomtown**

The idea of a Boomtown attraction has a long history within the Oil Region, originating as part of the 1960’s era plans for both Drake Well Museum and Petroleum Centre. During the 1994 Management Action Plan and in the subsequent Interpretive Prospectus, several ideas were advanced for an attraction that could be a major visitor draw while interpreting the “rough and ready” side of the early oil exploration days.

This concept was revisited as part of the Plan Update, with the finding that the existing market does not appear to support a substantial investment in such a facility – either by OHR, Inc. or by private investors. Such an attraction is expected to operate at a substantial deficit, making a major investment unattractive to either a public sector or private sector developer.

Despite the apparent difficulty of achieving a feasible major Boomtown attraction venue in the short to medium range in the OHR, the work of the Plan Update has concluded that the core idea associated with the Boomtown – communicating the dynamism of the early days of oil exploration to enhance the visitor potential of the OHR – is still a good one. The challenge is to find an approach to this type of interpretation and attraction that can fulfill several objectives:

- **Raise the visibility of the OHR and its interpretive themes.**

- **Engage more visitors than the current 15,20,000 / year level of current museum patronage, taking advantage of the visitor market segments within OHR that have future growth potential, including visitors to regional events and recreation users.**

- **Limit the amount of financial risk for ORA – in terms of development and operating costs – to levels that are commensurate with likely resources of the organization and benefit that can be achieved from such an approach.**

The Plan Update suggests that ORA not invest in development of a major permanent Boomtown attraction until one or more of the following conditions has occurred: (1) Improvement of market conditions; (2) Public entities such as PHMC and/or DCNR have the financial capacity and interest to develop a permanent, independent attraction as part of their facility enhancement; (3) Other funding sources, public or private, emerge with a strong interest or capability to develop such an attraction; (4) ORA has the capacity to undertake the risk of sponsorship and operations of a Boomtown attraction. In the meantime, the following actions are recommended that are consistent with the above objectives:

- **Expand Boomtown interpretation at existing interpretive venues.** Just as Drake Well Museum’s 1961 plan envisioned a “modest” Boomtown on site, additional interpretation and exhibits that are less costly than the 1961 proposal should be added to either the museum interior or grounds. One possible approach would see the redesign of the front lobby of the museum, potentially extending it out onto the forecourt of the museum building to simulate a boomtown street, with exhibits on either side to explain the uses and activities that characterized the period. Such an approach would be conceived as an exhibit to enhance the attractiveness and effectiveness of the museum instead of a “stand-alone” fee attraction that would require its own staff and would require considerable operating expense. Also, storefront exhibits would be far less costly than a stand-alone facility that would require “real” buildings, separate infrastructures and services, and its own staff. In addition, design of audio interpretation should be explored – such as cell phone based technology, tape, or CD tracks that would be correlated to key numbers at real sites – that would bring alive the grounds of the museum, the former structures and setting of Petroleum Centre, or the mown streets and remnant foundations of Pithole. If the Oil Region Alliance would require “real” buildings, separate infrastructures and services, and its own staff. In addition, design of audio interpretation should be explored – such as cell phone based technology, tape, or CD tracks that would be correlated to key numbers at real sites – that would bring alive the grounds of the museum, the former structures and setting of Petroleum Centre, or the mown streets and remnant foundations of Pithole. If the Oil Region Alliance were to develop such an audio “add-on” it could provide a source of supplementary income as a “must-see” experience.

- **Investigate the idea of a “Boomtown-in-a-box” as a marketing and promotional tool for OHR.** This approach would create a traveling exhibit that could be themed as a “Boomtown” to be installed at the many events throughout the OHR, that promote oil heritage and the region’s attractions at events such as Applefest®, fairs, and other major gatherings.
As of August 2004, the Comfort Inn in Titusville opened, adding 48 rooms and an indoor pool to the OHR supply of accommodations.

Accommodations

As part of the Plan Update, a special study of accommodations across the OHR was undertaken to determine market potential for new facilities and to define an appropriate strategy and action program. This study was prompted by local concern that existing facilities seemed inadequate to provide for peak festival events, such as Applefest®, and a desire to attract new facilities that will support increased economic benefits associated with overnight tourism.

The findings of this study were that the 4494 existing conventional hotel/motel rooms in the OHR had average annual occupancy rates below 50%, meaning that such facilities were typically below the national occupancy average of 60% and struggle to achieve overall positive operating characteristics. These rates, plus the lack of any planned development that would fundamentally alter market dynamics, mean that demand for such conventional facilities would be likely to correspond to Commonwealth and national trends in the general lodging sector.

However, there is an emerging trend in the region for expansion of specialty lodging accommodations to take advantage of unique sites, accommodation concepts, or market niches. There are 42 existing specialty units in the region, with an additional 65 units in planning or development stages. These additions to the supply of accommodations include the OC&T Caboose Motel in Titusville, the Treehouse Cabins in Two Mile Run County Park, a high-end lodging facility in the Galena Signal Building in Franklin, and expansion to other bed and breakfast (B&B) facilities in the region. The Plan Update recommends ORA actions to expand accommodations should include:

- Reserve a site for future possible Boomtown development that has mixed-use potential and can accommodate phased development. The Oil Region Alliance should consider acquiring or partnering with others to acquire a site that is sufficiently large and suitably located to enable a staged development. Initial stages might include economic development or other uses, including the relocation here of historic buildings threatened on their original sites, such as the Neilltown Church. Total development build-out might be a sufficiently long time in the future that a Boomtown attraction could be considered when and if some of the conditions defined for a permanent Boomtown attraction have come to pass. A site that may meet these characteristics, depending on the terms of its acquisition and development, could be the former Rouseville refinery site. The advantages of this site, in addition to its historic associations, include a highly visible location on Route 8, possible access to the OC&TRR if, it is extended, significant size (over 40 acres), adequate existing infrastructure, and a dramatic setting close to Oil Creek. Further, if the cost of remediation of existing environmental hazards is borne by the current owner, brownfield development incentives might encourage both conventional investment and development of a visitor attraction.

- The Oil Region Alliance should set a goal to encourage growth in the OHR supply of specialty lodging. The Plan Update recommends a goal to increase total current planned/existing supply by another 65 rooms (or by about a 60% increase over the total of existing and currently planned specialty accommodations) by 2010.

- Sponsor an OHR Hospitality Initiative designed to support the growth of the OHR lodging industry. The impending functional integration of agencies to create ORA pres-
presents a special opportunity to create such an initiative, which would also blur the lines between heritage, economic, and tourism development. Under leadership provided by OHR, the Hospitality Initiative would offer direct services to two major audiences: current hospitality facility owners/operators, and prospective operators/investors who are considering entry into the market. The initiative would also augment other OHR efforts by ensuring that ongoing festivals, events, and other visitation-oriented initiatives maintain a focus on expanding overnight visitation.

The Hospitality Initiative will warrant a dedicated full-time employee to add a level of energy and productivity to the project that may not be possible without dedicated staff. The position may not need to be permanent, but would likely require tenure of at least five years in order to meet the suggested objectives. Functions of the proposed OHR Hospitality Initiative may include:

- **Identify, market, and facilitate real estate opportunities for lodging development.** By working with realty professionals to maintain lists of potential hospitality-oriented development opportunities in the region, the initiative can help ensure that key opportunities are identified and matched with interested investors.

- **Provide funding assistance.** On an ongoing basis, the initiative should identify state and local funding sources for particular projects, including tax credits where applicable. The OHR Hospitality Initiative should consider offering a **revolving loan program** to help finance high-potential hospitality projects that are otherwise undercapitalized. The Oil Region Alliance could also supplement loans with grants, subject to funding availability, for preservation associated with development of niche accommodations facilities.

- **Provide marketing assistance to new and existing operators.** The initiative would serve as a clearinghouse for understanding and targeting potential markets, with an emphasis on developing the region’s portfolio of niche accommodations.

- **Assist in product development.** The initiative can serve as a product development resource for new or repositioned products. As part of this effort, it will be important to understand why particular strategies have worked well in other places, and how they may need to be adapted in order to have a high probability of succeeding in the Oil Heritage Region. If ideas are found that resonate well with the business community (for example, emulating Vermont’s system of B&Bs connected by trails) and are deemed worthy of pursuit, the Hospitality Initiative can serve as an organizational hub for creating the necessary infrastructure, networks, packaging, etc.

- **Help the region in leveraging overnight visitation from visitors to its many events and festivals.** The initiative’s work will naturally lead to an ever-increasing understanding of the OHR overnight visitor market. By serving in an advisory capacity for future event/festival planning and other visitation-related efforts, the hospitality initiative could help the region optimize its overnight visitor yield from the annual event calendar.
Economic Impact System

In response to OHR, Inc.’s request for a cost-effective approach for tracking the economic and fiscal impacts resulting from increased area visitation, the Plan Update includes a detailed methodology for this process that will enable estimates of job generation and tax revenue contributions as a performance measurement tool. The recommended methodology is designed to provide a relatively simple, reliable, and effective measure of economic/fiscal impact.

The plan recommends a general approach that would estimate total area visitation based on benchmarks determined from a periodic visitor survey. The survey would analyze visitor behaviors, including the likelihood that visitors will frequent particular attractions and/or patronize the region’s lodging facilities. The recommended survey instrument will enable differentiation between daytrip and overnight visitor patterns, including such factors as frequency of stay, distance traveled, preferred activities, demographic qualities, etc. The survey will also facilitate the calculation of total visitation to the region. The proportion of visitors staying in hotels/B&Bs will be adjusted for frequency of visitation (which is tracked separately for daytrip and overnight visitors), and applied against the region’s lodging occupancy data to derive a total visitation number.

Based on the recommended approach, the regional visitation estimate would be determined by estimating the proportion of total visitors that stay at lodging facilities in the region and apportioning the proportion of those visitors who are tourism/travel visitors, as opposed to business or other non-tourist travelers and then, based on the regional survey, determining ratios of the overnight tourism visitors to day-trip visitors.

Once these estimates are made, factors can then be applied, based on the survey data, to estimate expenditures by each type of visitor, total tourism expenditures, and the derivative consequence of these expenditures on local employment and tax revenues. When this procedure is continued for several years, basic trend line information will be available that will enable ORA to meet its tracking objectives.
OHR Management

Oil Region Alliance
The Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism will be the management entity for this Plan going forward and is a new entity created by merging Oil Heritage Region, Inc., Venango Economic Development Corporation (VEDC), Oil City Community Development Corporation (OCCDC), and the Oil Heritage Region Tourist Promotion Agency (OHRTPA). This consolidation will be a unique, multi-functional management entity that has little, if any, parallel in the U.S. heritage movement. The Oil Region Alliance will have broad capacity in tourism, community development, and heritage preservation, a targeted action area, financing and operation capabilities, experience in property development and management, and the ability to demonstrate leadership that will engender confidence from public and private sector partners.

The Oil Region Alliance Agenda
The Oil Region Alliance will continue to manage the OHR, incorporating the functions that have, to date, been previously fulfilled by Oil Heritage Region, Inc. These include collaboration with the entity’s Board, development of budgets and project proposals, solicitation of funds from the state and other entities, and the management of planning and implementation projects of many types. 5

- Build a consolidated identity – with a common logo and initiatives to build the brand recognition of the region.
- Develop products to support ORA and provide ongoing revenue – an example of such a product would be audio tours of key sites, mentioned as part of interpretive recommendations. Such a service would combine tourism and heritage development. These products could be made available for Drake Well Museum, Pithole, Petroleum Centre, and walking tours in core communities. The Oil Region Alliance might finance development of these products and then advertise them at these locations, receiving a proportion of the fees that would be charged to visitors who elect to purchase these services.
- Pursue unique projects that are of interest to more than one agency – Such projects could combine, for example, economic development, heritage preservation, and interpretation. A good example would include a staged approach to portions of the former Rouseville refinery that could pursue brownfield incentives for remediation, preservation of the signature refinery smokestack, interim economic development, and holding a site in reserve for possible utilization for a boomtown attraction in the future should appropriate circumstances evolve. This would combine an economic development initiative that could be an effective use of the VEDC capabilities with a longer-term heritage initiative that could benefit from OHRTPA and OHR, Inc. capabilities.
- Undertake longer-term technical assistance programs that are multi-purpose - two examples would include the recommended hospitality assistance program and the economic impact assessment system. Other technical assistance programs for preservation and education, as begun by OCCDC and the partners, should also be continued and developed in coordination with the Alliance’s long-term activities.
- Develop new revenue sources to support the Oil Region Alliance and its heritage efforts - VEDC and OCCDC manage certain properties and derive income from them. Where the ORA makes investments in properties where private value is added, the entity could negotiate for portions of the rental income stream at the appropriate time. This is a model that could be effectively used for investments in major properties, such as the Weaver Building, or other major real property investments in the community (for instance, along Routes 8 and 62) that are forecast to generate a private return in the future and would not be feasible without start-up assistance.
- Undertake event sponsorships and participate in events outside the region - With a higher regional profile, the ORA could solicit sponsors for key events that could defray the costs of these events and potentially contribute earned income.
- Expand partnerships with other collaborating entities to take advantage of the larger capabilities of the Oil Region Alliance – These entities include, but would not be limited to, visitor interpretive venues and institutions across the region, recreational interests and operators, hospitality industry interests, corporate, business, and private real estate interests, foundations, philanthropic, and corporate interests, partners for river-based initiatives, and state agencies.

Bottom: The owners and operators of the brewpub in Titusville have accomplished an excellent rehabilitation of an historic property that contributes to the vitality and activity in the center of this community.

5 These activities will be focused on the actions delineated in the prior plans as well as this Plan Update. The expanded capabilities of the Oil Region Alliance may enable a range of new ventures that would have been difficult with the predecessor OHR, Inc.
Costs and Phasing

Costs

Costs for the recommended actions have been estimated to establish planning level budgets for activities and projects that represent reasonable levels to accomplish purposes of the Plan Update. It is highly likely that specific line items or sub-categories may change as more becomes known about the needs of future implementation.

Table 1 shows three sets of costs grouped under the broad OHR goals:

- Costs for the last ten years (1994 - 2004), based on actual expended or committed monies.
- Cost projections for the next ten years (2005 - 2014), based on estimates provided in the Plan Update.
- Summary aggregate costs though 2014; representing the sum of the two decades.

In each case, costs were shown in total for each project and summed for each goal, without regard for the source of this funding. Then, the amount that OHR, Inc. has contributed, or ORA might contribute, to support activities under each goal was estimated, inclusive of matching contributions to these funds. The basis of this estimate was a general extrapolation of the funds that OHR, Inc. has typically received through the Pennsylvania Heritage Park Program, assuming that this flow of funds continues over the next ten years. Finally, an estimate was made of the funding gap between the total aggregate cost estimate and the amount assumed to be available through PHPP and matching sources. This amount will have to be met by non-ORA sources. It is important to note that in the previous decade, non-OHR, Inc., or “Partner” expenditures, represented nearly three times the total of the combined amount contributed by OHR, Inc. funds from the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program and the required match. The projections for the future show that this ratio is likely to continue for ORA.

Although there have been substantial efforts to achieve National Heritage Area (NHA) designation for the Oil Region, the cost estimates in this plan update are not based on such designation, although if federal appropriations through a subsequent NHA designation become available, such supplementary funds could be applied to address some of the funding gaps defined above.

Phasing

Continued implementation of the OHR Management Action Plan, as modified by this Plan Update, may be considered as a series of phases that can overlap and respond to changing circumstances and funding opportunities that may emerge. Examples of changes that might influence the sequence of activities are the infusion of supplementary funds through National Heritage Area designation or through unexpected state or private sources. A summary of the central tenets of each phase is provided below:

Short term (next 3 years)

The intent of this phase is to adapt the emphasis of activities in the OHR to reflect the recommendations of this plan, while continuing to implement work in process. Key actions should include:

a) Build Regional and Operational Identity.
This will require a single professionally designed logo, a first rate ORA website, effective collaboration within the Oil Region Alliance,
marketing to advertise the Alliance's combined services to the community, installation of wayfinding and other signage, completion of orientation centers, and continued advocacy for NHA designation.

b) Strengthen Program Management Capacity. Actions should include launching the OHR Hospitality Initiative, providing technical and financial assistance to new niche accommodation initiatives, and implementing the economic impact assessment system.

c) Extend and Amplify Recreational Assets. The Oil Region Alliance should continue to collaborate and support AVTA and its partners. Key priorities should include interpretive installations along trail systems and new scenic overlooks, completion of the trail link between Petroleum Centre and Oil City, development of programs and infrastructure improvements along the Allegheny River, and links between the trail system and core community and recreational areas.

d) Reinforce the Region's Heritage Venues. The immediate emphasis should be to assist in implementing cost-effective enhancements to DWM, OCSP, and OC&TRR, including support from the Alliance for pilot audio interpretation projects. The Sesquicentennial of Oil celebration in 2009 will be here before we know it, and the region can use this event to increase awareness of the area's heritage and to increase outreach to potential oil industry sponsors. The Alliance should apply market knowledge to improve exhibit/education programs in other interpretive venues and should define appropriate assistance for other proposed heritage venues, including the Mather Museum in Titusville, and the potential natural gas exhibit or museum.

Table 1: Estimate of all Prior, Projected, and Cumulative Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OHR Goals</th>
<th>Total Actual and Committed Expenditure on OHR Related Projects in initial ten years (from 1994 through current spring 2004)</th>
<th>Summary Estimated Cost of Recommendations of Management Plan Update, next ten years from 2005 to 2014 (see Note 6)</th>
<th>Cumulative Totals of Actual, Committed, and Recommended Costs of all improvements within OHR, from inception in 1994 through 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>(C)=A+B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(E)</td>
<td>(F)=E+F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(G)=E+F</td>
<td>(H)=A+F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(I)=B+G</td>
<td>(J)=H+I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHR Goals</td>
<td>ORH, Inc. and project-based expenditures by partners without OHR, Inc. participation since 1994 OHR Management Action Plan</td>
<td>Total spent or committed to date since 1994 OHR Management Action Plan</td>
<td>Total New Actions Recommended in Plan Update, by Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>$672,343</td>
<td>$5,316,120</td>
<td>$14,104,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development and Tourism</td>
<td>$1,012,299</td>
<td>$3,767,006</td>
<td>$980,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>$2,162,838</td>
<td>$3,576,000</td>
<td>$11,640,716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>$122,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>$5,988,463</td>
<td>$14,035,831</td>
<td>$14,104,631</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>$746,145</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$178,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$5,677,842</td>
<td>$16,035,827</td>
<td>$8,110,019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes for Partner expenditures in Column B for 1994-2004 period:

Note 1: Recreation includes various grants for trail acquisition and improvement, per data provided from James Halden, President of AVTA.

Note 2: Interpretation amount includes at DWM estimated $2,750,000 for Jersey Bridge, $122,000 for Transportation Building, and OC&TRR work for total of $705,000, including car repairs, Ferry St. Station work, Caboose Motel, and bridge repairs.

Note 3: Economic development expenditures include streetscape improvements in Franklin, Titusville, and Oil City with CDBG funds, other local funds, and ISTEA funds.

Other Notes for the Update Recommendations from 2005-2014:

Note 4: Amounts estimated for ORA have been distributed by goal to reflect evolving priorities of OHR from Plan Update.

Note 5: Other significant partner expenditures beyond those shown are likely to occur, such as those which might occur as part of Economic Development and Tourism. This Table is limited to specific partner expenditures that are associated with immediate recommendations of the Plan and its strategic expenditure priorities.

Note 6: This summary shows the “Total” in the first column, as all estimates were done without regard for source of funds. The proposed ORA contribution is shown in the second column. The third column is the difference between the second and first columns.
e) **Continue to lay the groundwork for New Venues and Ventures.** These include the short- and long-term use of the former Pennzoil refinery site at Rouseville, with its potential for a future interpretive use, OC&TRR extension to Oil City and Franklin, a Mobile Boomtown Exhibit, and the business and implementation plan for the Weaver Building.

### Mid-term (4 – 7 years)

The focus of this phase should be, while continuing to implement work in process from Phase I, to evaluate and refine operational processes and personnel, build new alliances and strengthen existing venues, and to implement or begin ventures defined in the plan.

- a) **Expand the recognition, brand identity, and management capacity of ORA.** The Oil Region Alliance should continue activities started in the previous phase and adapt its operations to adjust to new opportunities.

- b) **Continue to Reinforce Core Community Centers.** Actions should include enhancement of community riverfronts, including castways and park improvements, coordination of spur trail improvement, and support for rehabilitation of key buildings and areas.

- c) **Expand Regional Trail System Connections and Amenities and New Recreational Facilities.** During this phase, ORA should assist in development of trails to region’s edges and beyond, assist in expanding trailheads and associated services, provide assistance in expanding existing recreation venues, and work with appropriate entities to assist with development and marketing of mountain bike/All Terrain Vehicle areas.

- d) **Focus on packaging recreation and heritage experiences.** Activities should include developing and marketing sojourn type excursions, creation of new products such as Elderhostel and other educational programs in region, and work with niche accommodation facilities in packaging coordinated experiences to attract visitors.

- e) **Update and improve interpretation in the region.** This activity should encompass appropriate update of the region’s interpretive plan to reflect the market, support of improvements at key interpretive venues, and completion of development, as feasible, of new interpretive venues, such as the Weaver Building project, Mobile Boomtown, other boomtown alternatives to the extent feasible, and the Rouseville refinery site.

- f) **Develop additional revenue sources for the Oil Region Alliance.** This could include expansion of new merchandise offerings as well as partnership income producing ventures.

### Long-term (8 years and beyond)

This phase anticipates completion and expansion of many programs, ventures, and physical infrastructure proposed in Phase I and II, as well as building upon the organization’s efforts to achieve sustainability through income generating programs.

- a) **Expand Activities for Broader Community Benefit.** The Oil Region Alliance should continue to develop new educational and recreational improvements and programs by working with educational, interpretive and recreational venues in region to strengthen and add programs and activities.

- b) **Develop long-term use/operation for new ORA ventures.** As proposed ventures mature, including the Weaver Building, Rouseville site, and Mobile Boomtown or other boomtown alternatives, define new directions that have the potential for revenue and positive community impact.

- c) **Seek ORA Sustainability.** During this phase, subject to NHA designation and ongoing state and/or federal appropriations, ORA should evolve into a sustainable organization that has direct sources of revenue. The Oil Region Alliance should continue to provide ongoing coordination and assistance for programs to support its mission goals—working towards supplementing grant and philanthropic contributions with sources of earned income.

At this point, and periodically throughout the implementation process, it will be appropriate to reassess progress on this plan to adapt to the changed circumstances within the OHR and beyond.
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